

**THE RESIDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE  
FAIRFAX COUNTY REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY  
3700 Pender Drive, Suite 100  
Fairfax, Virginia, 22030-7442**

February 16, 2000

Ms. Paula Sampson, Director,  
Department of Housing and  
Community Development  
Fairfax, VA

Dear Ms. Sampson:

The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority's (FCRHA) Resident Advisory Council has reviewed the FCRHA's draft 5-Year Plan for Fiscal Years 2001 – 2005 and Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2001 and is submitting its comments in accordance with Section 511 of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility of 1998. These comments are based on the Council's detailed review of the plans and our discussions with the Department of Housing and Community Development's Housing Management Division's (HMD) staff. We wish to thank you and those HMD staff members who devoted many hours in organizing the Council and ensuring that Council members were properly trained to perform their mission. In addition, HMD staff presentations on the many complex subjects involving the Public Housing and Section 8 programs assisted the Council in its work.

Overall, the Council concluded that the FCRHA's 5-Year and Annual Plans are accurate, factual, and written in a clear and concise manner. Basically, the Council's recommendations for plan revisions are based on a consensus of members that the plans' goals and components should be modified to include additional needs of low and very-low income families living in Public Housing and Section 8 housing. The Council's specific recommendations follow.

FCRHA's 5-Year Plan

1. The Council recommends that the FCRHA modify its mission statement in the 5-Year Plan to include the words "and residents" in the following sentence. "The FCRHA carries out its mission and goals through the activities of its staff, the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) *(and residents)*".

*(HCD concurs with the Council's recommendation and has revised the plan subject to final FCRHA approval.)*

2. The Council is proposing that neighborhood watch type programs be encouraged in FCRHA Public Housing developments so that public housing security can be improved. Also, the Council recommends that the Plan include an item that would

encourage a “safe house” program in Public Housing developments, whereby children can go when they are threaten outside of their rental units.

*(HCD concurs with the Council’s recommendations and will include in the plan that HCD will work with the Fairfax County Police Department to encourage the development of neighborhood watch, window watch, and safe house programs in developments where residents have an interest to start these programs. This revision is subject to final FCRHA approval.)*

3. Regarding FCRHA’s Goal of promoting self-sufficiency and asset development of assisted households 1 (b) on page 8, the Council agrees that computer learning centers are needed at Public Housing developments to promote self-sufficiency and asset development. However, the Council recommends that the FCRHA look into ways to allow adults residents to use these facilities as well as children.

*(HCD concurs with the Council’s recommendations and will approach the providers of the computer facilities to determine if an arrangement can be worked out so that adults, as well as children, can use these facilities at the FCRHA developments. No revision to the plan is required.)*

4. Also, regarding goal 1 (b) on page 8, the Council recommends the FCRHA to expand training and job opportunities for Public Housing and Section 8 residents.

*(HCD concurs with the Council’s recommendation and will continue to look for outreach to residents who need job training and employment opportunities. No revision to the plan is required.)*

5. Also, regarding goal 1 (b) on page 8, the Council recommends that the plan include an item that would address the need of single parents who are seeking self-sufficiency by making these parents aware of available child support enforcement programs that are available through the Division of Child Support Enforcement and the Juvenile Domestic Relations Court.

*(HCD concurs with the Council’s recommendation and will modify the FCRHA goal to include this item subject to final FCRHA approval. Also, the information will be placed in the tenant orientation package.)*

## FCRHA’s Annual Plan

### Housing Needs

1. The Council recommends that the FCRHA’s housing needs strategy section include a definitive statement that FCRHA’s will continue to request the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to increase the number of affordable dwelling units (ADU) in the county for low and moderate income families. Also, the FCRHA should encourage the development of other resources such as single occupancy units.

*(HCD concurs with the Council's recommendation and has revised the plan subject to final FCRHA approval.)*

#### Policies on Eligibility, Selection and Admissions

2. The Council recommends that the plan include a disclosure regarding admission preferences to public housing and Section 8 units, other than date and time of application, specifically, including in its waiting list preferences, a preference for victims of domestic violence.

*(HCD does not concur with this recommendation because, up to 55 percent of the annual Section 8 admissions are selected from a special priority admissions pool. Many of these pool applicants are victims of domestic violence, who meet local priorities and are referred by human service providers and enrolled in certain human services programs. Thus, HCD feels that it is already serving victims of domestic violence in close cooperation with the human services system.)*

#### Operations and Management

3. The Council also recommends that the FCRHA recognize the problems faced by Public Housing residents with medical needs which includes multiple chemical sensitivity that may require temporarily relocation to other housing.

*(HCD concurs with this recommendation and will address the problem by including specific guidance in the Public Housing Policies and Procedures Handbook.)*

#### Rent Determination Policies

4. The Council recommends that deductions and/or exclusions in rent determinations recognize the medical needs of Public Housing and Section 8 tenants by extending to them the same medical expenditures that are allowed for the elderly and handicapped. In addition, the deductions and/or exclusions policies should recognize the tenant's transportation costs.

*(HCD believes that the Council's recommendation has merit, but, if implemented at this time, the deductions would create a financial hardship for the Public Housing program due to reductions that would occur in rental collections. Under the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, the FCRHA has the responsibility to set rents at levels that will cover the costs of providing the rental housing units.)*

#### Capital Improvement Needs

5. The Council recommends that the FCRHA reassess the Capital Improvement Needs at the Greenwood Apartments in relations to laundry room and recreation facilities. The Council believes that additional laundry room facilities can be provided by converting unused utility room space in building 3077 Patrick Henry Drive to laundry

room space and expand the laundry facilities located in the other buildings. Regarding recreational facilities, the Council recommends that recreational facilities be provided at various complexes to prevent children from playing in the street.

*(HCD concurs with the Council's recommendation and will reassess the laundry facility needs at the Greenwood Apartments. These alleged deficiencies were not identified when HCD's Contractor assessed the needs at this development, nor were they identified by residents who completed the last Resident Satisfaction Surveys. Prior HCD capital improvement projects at the Greenwood Apartments have provided recreation facilities for various age groups, such as a playground area for 9 and 10 year olds and a tot-lot for younger children. The development lacks adequate space needed to provide larger facilities, such as basketball courts for older children.)*

6. Regarding the item that will replace kitchen cabinets at the Belleview Apartments in FY 2002, the Council is questioning the proposed action since kitchen cabinets were replaced in the early 1990's. The funds would be used for other capital needs on that property.

*(HCD scheduled this work based on an average replacement schedule. Before the work to replace these cabinets starts, HCD will inspect the units to determine if replacement of the cabinets are needed. If replacements are not needed, then funds are programmed for other needed work at the development.)*

#### Homeownership

7. The Council recommends that HCD include in the Section 8 homeownership program a provision that specifically allows tenants residing in Section 8 rental units to purchase that unit providing that the owner is willing to sell and the purchase agreement meets all of HCD requirements.

*(HCD concurs with the Council's recommendation and will make this point clear in the program policies and procedures when they are written.)*

8. The Council is concerned about the well being of tenants who purchase homes with Section 8 assistance. The Council recommends that the FCRHA share these same concerns by ensuring that prospective Section 8 homeowners receive pre and post homeownership counseling that prevents tenants from making homeownership mistakes that may lead to defaults and foreclosure proceedings.

*(HCD also concurs with the recommendation and will provide both pre- and post counseling sessions to prospective Section 8 homeowners.)*

### Community Service

9. The Council recommends that tenants required to complete Community Service are provided community service opportunities that may eventually lead to job training opportunities and part-time and/or full-time employment.

*(HCD concurs with this recommendation. HCD encourages residents to locate and complete the type of Community Service they need to meet the requirement, as well as, developing skills. Also, we encourage them to seek job training as a means of fulfilling the Community Service requirement.)*

### Other Comments

10. The Council recommends that HUD modify its Rule on Community Service to require, with each additional year of Community Service that a resident completes, that the number of hours to be completed will be increased as an incentive to move these individuals to employment.

*(No response necessary from HCD since the recommendation is addressed to HUD)*

Again, the Council appreciates the excellent cooperation afforded us by HMD staff during our review of the plans and the opportunity to submit our comments to the drafts plans. If you have any questions regarding our recommendations, please contact me at work on 202-720-8966 or at my home phone on 703-799-1693.

Sincerely,

Anna M. Pierce  
Chairperson